

THE AMHERST ALLIANCE
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January 24, 2004

Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: CALVARY CHAPEL Petition For Expanded Use Of Satellators And Other Long Distance Translators (RM-10609)

Dear FCC Commissioners and Staff,

THE AMHERST ALLIANCE has submitted various filings in FCC Docket RM-10609, both opposing the expanded use of satellators (and other “long distance translators”) and proposing reforms to reverse the proliferation of such translators in recent years.

THE AMHERST ALLIANCE now seeks to update The Record of these proceedings by submitting a recent, relevant document which post-dates the close of the Reply Comments deadline: that is, the text of a January 14, 2004 Editorial in RADIO WORLD. The text of the Editorial follows this letter.

This Editorial calls upon the FCC to initiate major translator reforms. The proposed reforms are significant in their own right, but they also add weight to a major, multi-party 2004 Petition For Expedited Relief, Through Rulemaking. That Petition, which now has 63 signatories, was filed on November 14, 2003 with the FCC’s Office of the Secretary and also in the FCC’s Localism Task Force Docket (RM-10803). A comparison of the 2 documents will show that RADIO WORLD’s recommendations are broadly comparable to the translator reform proposals in the Expedited Relief Petition.

Sincerely,

Don Schellhardt, Esquire
President, THE AMHERST ALLIANCE

RW Opinion

01.14.04

Translators: Do Better Next Time

The recent filing window for new translators was deeply flawed.

Instead of fulfilling its role as regulator of broadcast spectrum, the FCC created a Wild, Wild West free-for-all that resulted in more than 10,000 applications for new translators. A couple of organizations filed for thousands of individual translators each.

The majority of these translator applications were mutually exclusive, tying up a huge number of valuable channels at the eternally court-challenged commission. Additionally, because only a rudimentary technical filing was required, nuisance applications with no technical merit were allowed to block legitimate proposals.

The FCC should learn from this mess and return to a system that requires applications to be technically accurate and complete before filing. Defective applications should be rejected and not allowed for re-filing in that window.

The FCC also should strictly enforce the requirement that all translators be able to receive an off-air signal from the station being translated. Translators are intended to extend the coverage of a local station; they are not intended to be used to develop a national radio network. A reasonable standard could be developed to prevent applications that proposed translating unbuilt stations (such as construction permits) or stations located many states away.

Finally, the FCC should consider a reasonable numerical limit on applications from individual stations to reduce the number of “nuisance” filings only designed to block legitimate users (and potentially extort payments). No public good is served by allowing such gamesmanship to continue; filing windows were supposed to eliminate this parasitic behavior.

Let’s hope the commission realizes the problems with the translator process and does not allow it to become a precedent for future filing windows.